



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/smallholder-farmers-strive-support-relief-efforts-ethiopia>

Smallholder Farmers Strive to Support Relief Efforts in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, smallholder farmers grow 94 percent of that country's maize—a crop deemed crucial to Ethiopian food security. Maize has tremendous income-generating potential in Ethiopia, but only half of the country's farmers grow maize as a cash crop. Most smallholders lack the critical access to finance, improved inputs and markets that are required to transition from subsistence farming to commercial maize production and marketing. However, with USAID support under [Feed the Future](#), the U.S. Government's global hunger and food security initiative, this transition is becoming a reality for more than 30,000 smallholder farmers.

Late last year, the U.N. World Food Program (WFP) agreed to buy more than 28,000 metric tons of white maize, worth approximately \$10 million, from 16 of Ethiopia's farmer cooperative unions for its relief efforts in several chronically food insecure districts. With USAID support under Feed the Future, seven of the cooperative unions signed contracts to deliver 16,000 metric tons. The remaining nine unions received support from other donors.

The deal brings together USAID, WFP, the U.K.'s Department for International Development, and the Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency and Ministry of Agriculture. This marks the first time the WFP's food purchase program will directly source maize from Ethiopian farmer's cooperatives. The initiative builds on WFP's existing local purchase program, which last year purchased more than 100,000 metric tons globally from commercial farms and traders, for distribution mostly in Ethiopia.

"Through USAID support in Ethiopia, President Obama's Feed the Future initiative is leveraging hundreds of millions of dollars of other donor, government and private sector resources to help Ethiopia take steps to reduce its dependence on food aid," said USAID/Ethiopia Mission Director Dennis Weller. "The sales to WFP are a promising start for Ethiopia's relatively more productive farmers in the food secure districts to sell surpluses to benefit not only themselves, but the residents of food insecure areas."

The 28,000 metric tons of maize will be distributed to relief operations in Ethiopia's Amhara; Oromia; and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples regions. According to Abdou Dieng, WFP country director for Ethiopia, "WFP's aim in increasing purchases with local farmers is to help them to increase their income by connecting them to bigger markets."

The strategy is at the heart of Feed the Future's broader goals, according to Julie Howard, chief scientist in USAID's Bureau for Food Security. "That's fundamentally what Feed the Future is," she said. "It's looking at how to empower local farmers, local communities to improve their production ... to advance economic transformation in these countries."

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